

James Madison to Theodore Sedgwick, Jr., February 12, 1831. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910.

TO THEODORE SEDGWICK, JR. MAD. MSS.

Montpr., Feby. 12, 1831.

Sir, —I have recd. your letter of Jany. 27, wch. was retarded a few days, by going in the first instance to Richmond.

You ask “whether Mr. Livingston (formerly Governor of N. Jersey) took an active part in the debates (of the Fedl. Convention in 1787) and whether he was considered as having a leaning towards the federal party & principles;” adding “that you will be obliged by any further information it may be in my power to give you.”

Mr. Livingston did not take his seat in the Convention till some progress had been made in the task committed to it; and he did not take an active part in its debates; but he was placed on important committees, where it may be presumed he had an agency and a due influence. He was personally unknown to many, perhaps most of the members; but there was a predisposition in all to manifest the respect due to the celebrity of his name.

I am at a loss for a precise answer to the question whether he had a leaning to the federal party and principles. Presuming that by the party alluded to, is meant those in the Convention who favored a more enlarged in contradistinction to those who favored a more restricted grant of powers to the Fedl Govt. I can only refer to the recorded votes which are now before the public; and these being by States, not by heads, individual opinions are not

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disclosed by them. The votes of N. Jersey corresponded generally with the plan offered by Mr. Patterson; but the main object of that being to secure to the smaller States an equality with the larger in the structure of the Govt. in opposition to the outline previously introduced, which had reversed the object, it is difficult to say what was the degree of power to which there might be an abstract leaning. The two subjects, the structure of the Govt. and the *quantum* of power entrusted to it, were more or less inseparable in the minds of all, as depending a good deal the one on the other. After the compromise which gave the small States an equality in one branch of the Legislature, and the large States an inequality in the other branch, the abstract leaning of opinions would better appear. With those however who did not enter into debate, and whose votes could not be distinguished from those of their State colleagues, their opinions could only be known among themselves or to their particular friends.

I know not sir that I can give you any of the further information you wish that is not attainable with more authenticity & particularity from other sources. My acquaintance with Govr. Livingston was limited to an exchange of the common civilities, & these to the period of the Convention. In my youth I passed several years in the College of N. Jersey, of which he was a Trustee, and where his two sons, William & the late member of the Supreme Court of the U. S. were fellow students. I recollect to have seen him there in his capacity of Trustee, and to have heard him always spoken of as among the distinguished lawyers, and as conspicuous among the literary patriots of N. J. I recollect, particularly, that he was understood to be one of the authors of a work entitled "The Independent Reflector," and that some

of the papers in it ascribed to him, being admired for the energy & eloquence of their composition, furnished occasionally to the students orations for the Rostrum, which were alternately borrowed from books & composed by themselves.

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I regret sir that I have not been able to make a more important contribution for the biographical memoir you meditate. Wishing you all the success in other researches, which the object of them merits, I tender you my respectful and friendly salutations.